

Statistical bulletin

Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: August 2020

A summary of the latest long-term international migration estimates for the UK for the year ending March 2020. Data from the Home Office, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) are also included.

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Next release:
To be announced

Correction

27 August 2020 11:09

An error was identified when quoting EU emigration estimates. This was entered in error and has now been corrected. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

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1 . Other migration outputs in this release

Other international migration outputs released today (27 August 2020) can be found on the following pages:

- [Immigration Statistics, year ending June 2020 \(Home Office\)](#)
- [EU Settlement Scheme Quarterly Statistics \(Home Office\)](#)
- [Local area migration indicators, August 2020](#)
- [National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals: January 2002 to June 2020 \(Department for Work and Pensions, DWP\)](#)

Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on international migration statistics

This release covers the period up to the year ending March 2020. However, the period in which data were collected from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) covers up to 16 March 2020. The IPS was suspended on this date because of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

The weighting methodology has been adapted for March to compensate for these missing data. This compensation means that the reporting period for this release remains unchanged. Quality assurance checks have confirmed that the new weighting methodology has not impacted the estimates. For more information on the impact of the coronavirus on the IPS, please see the [strengths and limitations](#) section of [Overseas travel and tourism statistics: January, February and March provisional results](#).

In addition, it is recognised that international travel patterns have changed significantly in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic and therefore we have also provided insights on recent travel patterns in the period up to the end of June 2020 (see Section 8). However, this is only a partial picture and represents all travel movements, not just international migrants.

2 . Development of migration statistics

As part of our [transformation journey](#) we are making use of all available data sources to provide a richer and deeper understanding of migration. We published our first set of preliminary adjustments in the [August 2019 Migration Statistics Quarterly Report \(MSQR\)](#) to produce our current best assessment of migration trends. The methods applied in the current preliminary adjustments are described in the [Long-Term International Migration \(LTIM\) estimates methodology](#).

While we go through this transformation journey, the MSQR has been reclassified as [Experimental Statistics](#) to support this period of development and innovation to meet the public good.

As a result of the Migration Statistics Transformation Journey, the International Passenger Survey (IPS) being stretched beyond its original purpose and the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19), this will be the last MSQR based on IPS estimates. Administrative data will be used to deliver new measures of migration from November 2020 onwards, making use of all available data to fully understand migration.

The limitations of the IPS are more prominent during periods of high uncertainty, such as the current coronavirus pandemic. This highlights the importance of making best use of all available data sources to understand migration.

3 . Main points

- To fully understand long-term international migration trends, we need to consider all available data sources; throughout this report, we provide our best assessment of migration trends given data availability.
- In the year ending March 2020, around 313,000 more people moved to the UK, intending to stay for 12 months or more than left the UK (net migration, the balance between immigration and emigration).
- Over the year, around 715,000 people moved to the UK (immigration) and around 403,000 people left the UK (emigration).
- The increase in immigration and net migration is being driven by an increase in non-EU nationals arriving in the UK for study reasons.
- Of those coming to the UK, 257,000 were arriving for formal study, with 458,000 arriving for work, family or other reasons.
- While collecting data for the Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020 International Passenger Survey (IPS), there was an overestimation in the number of non-EU students, particularly students coming from Asia; therefore an adjustment has been applied to non-EU student immigration for year ending Quarter 1 2020 estimates using Home Office visa allocations and consequently overall immigration and net migration estimates.
- This is the last MSQR to use IPS data; all future migration statistics will be administrative data-based estimates.

Statistician's comment

"Our best estimate of net migration, using all available data sources, is 313,000 for the year ending March 2020. After a period of stability, we were seeing migration levels begin to increase in the past 12 months leading up to the coronavirus pandemic. This was being driven by increases in non-EU student arrivals, mainly from China and India.

"The IPS data were collected up to March 2020 and do not take into account the significant impact the pandemic has had on international migration since then."

Jay Lindop, Director of the Centre for International Migration, Office for National Statistics.

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4 . Migration to and from the UK

In the year ending March 2020, long-term international migration continued to add to the UK population. Our current best estimates show that around 313,000 more people moved to the UK with an intention to stay for 12 months or more than left the UK (net migration).

The findings in this section are based on the preliminary adjusted estimates for the years in which they are available, as well as the additional adjustments for non-EU student immigration in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020. International migration estimates for April 2020 onwards will no longer be measured using the International Passenger Survey (IPS), following the pausing of the IPS as a result of the coronavirus. For more information, please see our [transformation overview](#).

Over the year, around 715,000 people moved to the UK (immigration) and around 403,000 people left the UK (emigration).

The increase in immigration and net migration is being driven by an increase in non-EU nationals arriving for study reasons. Of those immigrating to the UK, 257,000 were arriving for formal study, with 458,000 arriving for work, family or other reasons.

Between 2016 and 2019, long-term net migration, immigration and emigration have remained broadly stable (Figure 1). However, recent data suggest that migration is changing. Since 2019, there has been an increase in immigration and net migration. This is being driven by an increase in immigration from non-EU citizens arriving to study in the UK.

In the year ending March 2020, non-EU citizens added to the UK population, with 316,000 more people estimated to have arrived than left. An estimated 437,000 non-EU citizens came to the UK to stay for 12 months or more, with 121,000 leaving the UK. This is being driven by an increase in non-EU students arriving to study for 12 months or more. Whilst Home Office data show an increase in non-EU students, the increase is not as large as that seen in IPS figures.

Because of an oversampling of long-term student migrants, an adjustment, [in line with previous adjustments](#), has been applied to non-EU student immigration for year ending Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020 estimates using Home Office (HO) visa allocations, this makes use of all available data sources. See [Section 6](#) for more detail.

EU citizens also continue to add to the UK population, with 195,000 EU citizens moving to the UK with an intention of staying 12 months or more, with 137,000 leaving the UK. This has created a net migration estimate of 58,000 for EU citizens.

Figure 1: Net migration has increased since 2019

Long-term international migration, UK, year ending June 2010 to year ending March 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics – Long-Term International Migration (LTIM), LTIM with preliminary adjustments based on Department for Work and Pensions and Home Office data

Notes:

1. The data in the charts represent our current best estimates. Different types of lines have been used to represent where adjustments have and have not been applied. Solid lines indicate adjustments have been applied (see note 2). Dashed lines indicate no adjustment has been made yet because of data availability.
2. Preliminary adjusted immigration and net migration estimates for EU8 citizens have been produced for the year ending December 2009 to the year ending March 2016, and preliminary adjusted emigration and net migration estimates for non-EU students have been produced for the year ending December 2012 to the year ending March 2020.
3. Confidence intervals for the unadjusted estimates are not shown in the chart but are available in the accompanying dataset.
4. Confidence intervals for the preliminary adjusted estimates are not yet available. This does not mean that the estimates are more certain. As we refine our methods, we will develop our approach for displaying uncertainty around estimates based on multiple data sources.
5. YE equals year ending.
6. An adjustment was made to YE Q1 2020 non-EU student immigration due to the unusual pattern in IPS student migration data. As non-EU student immigration feeds into overall immigration and net migration estimates, these estimates have also been adjusted.

[Download the data](#)

5 . EU and non-EU migration over time

Since 2016, overall migration levels have remained broadly similar. However, since 2019, there has been a change in migration patterns, which has led to an increase in net migration. This change in patterns is different for EU and non-EU citizens.

EU net migration had been previously falling following peak levels in 2015 and 2016. However, more recently, EU net migration has stabilised. Non-EU net migration has been gradually increasing since 2013, and as at the year ending March 2020, is at some of the highest levels seen since International Passenger Survey (IPS) records began for this group in 1975.

The findings in this section are based on the preliminary adjusted estimates for the years in which they are available, as well as the additional adjustments for non-EU student immigration in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020. International migration estimates for April 2020 onwards will no longer be measured using the International Passenger Survey (IPS), following the pausing of the IPS as a result of the coronavirus. For more information, please see our [transformation overview](#).

Figure 2: Non-EU net migration has increased since 2013, while EU net migration has stabilised since 2018

Net migration by citizenship, UK, year ending June 2010 to year ending March 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics - Long-Term International Migration (LTIM), LTIM with preliminary adjustments based on Department for Work and Pensions and Home Office data

Notes:

1. The data in the charts represent our current best estimates. Different types of lines have been used to represent where adjustments have and have not been applied. Solid lines indicate adjustments have been applied (see note 2). Dashed lines indicate no adjustment has been made yet because of data availability. In addition, no adjustment has been applied to the data for British Citizens.
2. Preliminary adjusted net migration estimates for EU8 citizens have been produced for the year ending December 2009 to the year ending March 2016 and preliminary adjusted net migration estimates for non-EU students have been produced for the year ending December 2012 to the year ending March 2020
3. Confidence intervals for the unadjusted estimates are not shown in the chart but are available in the accompanying dataset.
4. Confidence intervals for the preliminary adjusted estimates are not yet available. This does not mean that the estimates are more certain. As we refine our methods, we will develop our approach for displaying uncertainty around estimates based on multiple data sources.
5. YE equals year ending.
6. An adjustment was made to YE Q1 2020 non-EU student immigration due to the unusual pattern in IPS student migration data. As non-EU student immigration feeds into overall immigration and net migration estimates, these estimates have also been adjusted.

[Download the data](#)

For EU and non-EU citizens, more people come to the UK than leave the UK and therefore both groups continue to add to the UK population. In contrast, more British citizens leave the UK than return to the UK (Figure 3). In the year ending March 2020, 61,000 more British citizens left the UK for 12 months or more than arrived over the same time period.

Decisions to migrate are complex, and a person's decision to move to or from the UK will always be influenced by a range of social and economic factors.

EU migration has stabilised since 2018

From March 2016, no preliminary adjustments have been applied to EU migration estimates. As such, we have made our best assessment based on all the available evidence.

Following peak levels of over 200,000 in 2015 and early 2016, EU net migration declined between 2016 and 2018. However, since 2018, EU net migration has stabilised and stands at 58,000 in the year ending March 2020 (Figure 3).

Since 2015, EU emigration has increased, but has remained broadly stable in the last two years. Despite these trends, there were still more EU citizens moving to the UK, to stay for 12 months or more, than were leaving the UK. This trend was seen for all EU groups (EU15, EU8, EU2).

Figure 3: EU net migration has fallen since 2016, but has started to stabilise since 2018

EU long-term international migration, UK, year ending June 2010 to year ending March 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics - Long-Term International Migration (LTIM), LTIM with preliminary adjustments based on Department for Work and Pensions and Home Office data

Notes:

1. The data in the charts represent our current best estimates. Different types of lines have been used to represent where adjustments have and have not been applied. Solid lines indicate adjustments have been applied (see note 2). Dashed lines indicate no adjustment has been made yet because of data availability.
2. Preliminary adjusted immigration and net migration estimates for EU8 citizens have been produced for the year ending December 2009 to the year ending March 2016.
3. Confidence intervals for the unadjusted estimates are not shown in the chart but are available in the accompanying dataset.
4. Confidence intervals for the preliminary adjusted estimates are not yet available. This does not mean that the estimates are more certain. As we refine our methods, we will develop our approach for displaying uncertainty around estimates based on multiple data sources.
5. YE equals year ending.

[Download the data](#)

Non-EU migration

An estimated 316,000 more non-EU citizens moved to the UK than left in the year ending March 2020. This net estimate has gradually increased since 2013. This is largely because of a rise in non-EU immigration, currently at some of the highest levels recorded, while emigration has remained broadly stable.

Looking at all available data sources, the rise in non-EU immigration since 2016 is mainly driven by more migrants arriving for formal study. [Section 6](#) provides more detail.

Because of an oversampling of long-term student migrants, an adjustment, [in line with previous adjustments](#), has been applied to non-EU student immigration for year ending Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020 estimates using Home Office (HO) visa allocations, this makes use of all available data sources. See [Section 6](#) for more detail.

Figure 4: Non-EU net migration has gradually increased since 2013, to some of the highest levels on record mainly driven by a rise in those coming to the UK to study

Non-EU long-term international migration, UK, year ending June 2010 to year ending March 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics - Long-Term International Migration (LTIM), LTIM with preliminary adjustments based on Department for Work and Pensions and Home Office data

Notes:

1. The data in the charts represent our current best estimates. Different types of lines have been used to represent where adjustments have and have not been applied. Solid lines indicate adjustments have been applied (see note 2). Dashed lines indicate no adjustment has been made because of data availability.
2. Preliminary adjusted emigration and net migration estimates for non-EU students have been produced for the year ending December 2012 to the year ending March 2020.
3. Confidence intervals for the unadjusted estimates are not shown in the chart but are available in the accompanying dataset.
4. Confidence intervals for the preliminary adjusted estimates are not yet available. This does not mean that the estimates are more certain. As we refine our methods, we will develop our approach for displaying uncertainty around estimates based on multiple data sources.
5. YE equals year ending.
6. An adjustment was made to YE Q1 2020 non-EU student immigration due to the unusual pattern in IPS student migration data. As non-EU student immigration feeds into overall immigration and net migration estimates, these estimates have also been adjusted.

[Download the data](#)

The increases in non-EU immigration since 2013 have mainly been driven by a rise in the number of Asian citizens - particularly East and South Asian citizens - coming to the UK, now at 329,000 in the year ending March 2020.

6 . Non-UK student immigration to the UK

As has been the long-term trend, formal study remains the most common reason for non-EU citizens coming to the UK. In the year ending March 2020, it is estimated that around 196,000 non-EU citizens arrived in the UK intending to stay for a year or more for formal study (51% of total estimated non-EU immigration). All available data sources have shown an increase in the number of non-EU students arriving in the UK up until year-end March 2020 (Figure 5).

Oversampling of long-term student migrants

Processing and quality assurance of the International Passenger Survey (IPS) data for the first quarter (Jan to Mar) of 2020 identified a possible issue in the data, namely an unexpected large rise in the number of non-EU student contacts. This meant that the IPS formal study estimate was larger than the Home Office visa allocation for year-end March 2020, which was unlikely according to the historical trend (Figure 5).

A detailed review of the data and associated processes suggests this may be because of the IPS being susceptible to sampling variability. This observation aligns with [previous analysis](#), which identified that large numbers of students may travel at the same time because of course start dates, meaning that some IPS shifts may include clusters of student contacts. If this was to occur, the IPS data may overestimate the number of long-term student migrants. This is a limitation of using a sample survey.

To offset the increase in non-EU student immigration seen in the IPS figures because of oversampling, Home Office (HO) visa data have been used to produce an adjusted estimate for non-EU student immigration. [In line with previous adjustments](#), the growth rate between Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 and Quarter 1 2020 seen in [HO non-EU student visa data \(Tier 4\)](#), has been applied to the non-EU student immigration IPS estimate from Quarter 1 2019 to reach an adjusted estimate for Quarter 1 2020. This process adjusts the level of non-EU student immigration so that the migration estimates increase at the same rate as student visa allocations.

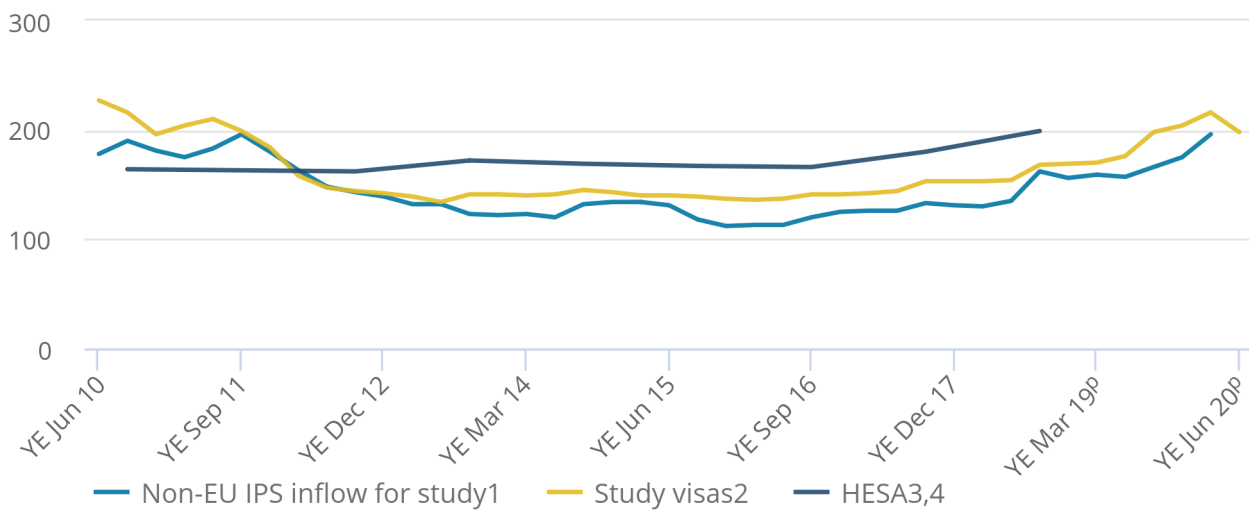
Administrative data allow the comparison of trends and have been important in helping us further understand the sampling variability seen in the International Passenger Survey non-EU student estimates. We are using administrative data to provide a broader overview of migration trends before we move to admin-based estimates only in the future.

Figure 5: Non-EU student immigration has gradually increased since 2016

Non-EU long-term student immigration trends by data source, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending March 2020

Figure 5: Non-EU student immigration has gradually increased since 2016

Non-EU long-term student immigration trends by data source, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending March 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – International Passenger Survey; Home Office – long-term study (Tier 4) visas; and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)– first-year student enrolments, UK

Notes:

1. Confidence intervals for the IPS-based estimates are not shown in the chart, but they are available in the accompanying dataset.
2. Visa data in the chart are Home Office sponsored study (Tier 4) visas granted for 12 months or more for main applicants only. This data is a subset of the study-related visa data published by the Home Office.
3. Student enrolment data are for 12 months or more and are ONS analysis of HESA first-year student records. The data are for student enrolments for courses starting in the academic year from August to July, by length of study and domicile (country of main address prior to study). HESA data are from higher education institutions in the UK. We present these data compared with the equivalent year ending September.
4. HESA data are annual point estimates, and the line illustrates the trend between those points.
5. YE equals year ending.
6. Each data source includes data for the most up to date time period available.
7. An adjustment was made to YE Q1 2020 non-EU student immigration due to the unusual pattern in IPS student migration data. As non-EU student immigration feeds into overall immigration and net migration estimates, these estimates have also been adjusted.
8. Home Office visa allocations YE June 2020 have been affected by the travel restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19. For more information, please look at [Home Office Immigration Statistics](#)

[Not all data sources are directly comparable](#). Users should be aware of this before drawing conclusions.

Home Office visa data

Latest available Home Office visa data in the year ending March 2020 (the comparable time period with Long-Term International Migration estimates) show that the number of Tier 4 (sponsored study) visas granted was 299,023, its highest level since the year ending June 2011, increasing 23% on the year ending March 2019.

This increase in immigration has largely been driven by a rise in Asian citizens coming to the UK for formal study. Home Office visa data show that Chinese nationals accounted for 40% of the 299,023 sponsored study visas granted in the year ending March 2020 and the number has more than doubled since 2012. Indian nationals accounted for a further 17%, with the number more than doubling in the latest year (now at 49,844 grants) and continuing to increase since 2016.

In the latest available Home Office visa data (up to year ending June 2020) the number of Tier 4 (sponsored study) visas granted for all lengths of stay (excluding student visitors) was 255,776, 1% higher than the previous year.

Home Office visa data show that Chinese nationals accounted for a third (34%) of the 255,776 sponsored study visas granted in the year ending June 2020, however, grants fell by 19% compared with the previous year. Indian nationals accounted for a further 19%, more than doubling in the latest year (now at 48,297 grants) and continuing the increase since 2016.

The vast majority (86%) of sponsored study visa applications in the year ending September 2019 (latest available data) were to study at higher education (university) institutions, and the number of non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals arriving at universities was the highest level on record.

7 . What can other data sources tell us about international migration?

To give the most complete understanding of international migration, we must consider a range of sources to understand the full picture. Please note the data in the section below can refer to different time periods.

Migration and the labour market

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) [produces estimates of the labour market activity of the resident population in the UK by nationality and country of birth](#) using the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

For the period January to March 2020, the LFS estimates show that there were an estimated 2.34 million EU nationals working in the UK and an estimated 1.36 million non-EU nationals working in the UK.

The latest period available (April to June 2020) showed that there was a decrease in both the number of EU (down 284,000 to 2.06 million) and non-EU (down 84,000 to 1.27 million) nationals in employment.

EU nationals working in the UK make up a higher proportion of the accommodation and food service activities industry than other industries. [Labour market](#) figures suggest that this industry is being most affected by coronavirus lockdown measures, and so may provide some explanation for the decrease in the number of EU nationals working in the UK between January to March 2020 and April to June 2020.

The number of migrants working in the UK is not a measure of how many people migrate to work. Our latest report into the [coherence of migration data sources](#) discusses the differences in what survey sources tell us about migration flows. The Long-Term International Migration and International Passenger Survey estimates are currently our best available estimates of migration flows for work-related reasons.

Department for Work and Pensions National Insurance registrations

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) produces estimates of National Insurance (NINo) allocations to overseas nationals using NINo registrations.

For the period ending March 2020, there were 430,000 NINo registrations to EU nationals and 326,000 to non-EU nationals.

The number of National Insurance numbers allocated should not be directly compared with our Long-Term International Migration estimates. We [published a note](#) to describe the differences between the two sources in more detail.

For the latest period available (year ending June 2020), there were 334,000 registrations to EU nationals, a decrease of 25% on the previous year (year ending June 2019). There were also 276,000 NINo registrations to non-EU nationals. This is an increase of 8% on the previous year.

Home Office visa, sponsorship and grants of asylum

Work

Latest available Home Office [data](#) also published today show that the number of work-related visas (including short-term or temporary work) granted in the year ending June 2020 was 144,938, 22% lower than the previous year.

In the year ending June 2020, the number of work visas granted to Asian nationals was 83,378, 26% lower than the previous year. Of these, 71% (59,610) were for skilled work (Tier 2).

Indian nationals accounted for nearly half (48%) of skilled work visas granted in the year ending June 2020, but their number of grants decreased by a quarter (25%) compared with the previous year. There were increases in Tier 2 grants for Philippine and Nigerian nationals in the latest year.

Home Office data also show that a majority (60%) of non-EU work migrants came to the UK for skilled work (Tier 2 visas). The number of Tier 2 visas had been rising steadily since July 2018, when doctors and nurses were removed from the Tier 2 cap, but fell in the most recent year. Those non-EU work migrants arriving for work not classified as skilled, are mainly coming under the Youth Mobility Scheme, as dependants or for other temporary purposes.

Asylum

Home Office statistics show that the UK offered protection - in the form of asylum, humanitarian protection, alternative forms of leave and resettlement - to 16,952 people in the year ending June 2020, 8% lower than the previous year. This consisted of:

- 11,116 grants of asylum
- 1,387 grants of humanitarian protection
- 889 grants of an alternative form of leave
- 3,560 people were provided protection under resettlement schemes, mainly Syrian nationals granted under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

In addition to these, over the same period, a further 2,932 people had an appeal allowed following an initial refusal of asylum.

Data from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Department for Transport (DfT) have also been explored but are not considered to be estimates of international migration. These alternative data provide earlier insights into international travel during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, up to June 2020 (Section 8 for more detail).

8 . Insights on recent international travel patterns

In May 2020, we released insights on [international travel up to March 2020](#) to provide a more recent picture than the official statistics on long-term international migration. We have now updated these to cover the time period up to June 2020.

Restrictions on international travel have been in place since early 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Recently the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) have started to [ease travel restrictions for British travellers](#) where countries are assessed as “no longer presenting an unacceptably high risk to British people traveling abroad.”

The insights in this section refer to travel patterns by all types of passengers, not just international migrants. Travel data can provide early insight and context to official statistics on international migration. However, they are not measures of international migration and do not provide the same coverage or definitions as the official statistics given elsewhere in this report.

Home Office recent passenger arrivals

[Home Office statistics published today](#) (27 August 2020) using Advanced Passenger Information (API) show that there were an estimated 1.3 million passenger arrivals (including returning UK residents) in April to June 2020.

This is a 97% (27.7 million) decrease compared with the same period in 2019, because of the coronavirus travel restrictions. API data primarily relate to passengers coming to the UK via commercial aviation routes. The data do not include all those arriving by sea or rail routes, by private aircraft or via the Common Travel Area (CTA).

At the same time the number of applications for visitor visas in the second quarter of 2020 was 99% lower than in the same period in 2019.

Recent travel insights

Using other data sources we explore how travel patterns have changed during the coronavirus pandemic, analysing the volume of travel through air and sea routes in 2020 compared with previous years. We have focused on these routes because of data availability and combined they account for the most travel to and from the UK. See Section 11 for more information on the data sources used in this section.

Using data from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), we can see that the volume of air passengers arriving to and departing from the UK was significantly lower in March 2020 compared with March 2019. April to June 2020 then saw further reductions compared with the same months in 2019, with differences of over 95% for travel to and from most world regions.

Figure 6 presents annual percentage change in monthly air passenger arrivals to the UK. Further disaggregation by UK country and those departing from the UK is available within the download file of Figure 6.

Figure 6: There was widespread decline in international air travel to the UK since March 2020

Annual percentage change in monthly air passenger arrivals at airports in the UK from airports in regions of the world, January to June, 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics analysis of Civil Aviation Authority data

Notes:

1. Country regions are where the foreign airport is located and are based on the country of residence groupings used in the International Passenger Survey (IPS).
2. For more information on this analysis please see Section 11.

[Download the data](#)

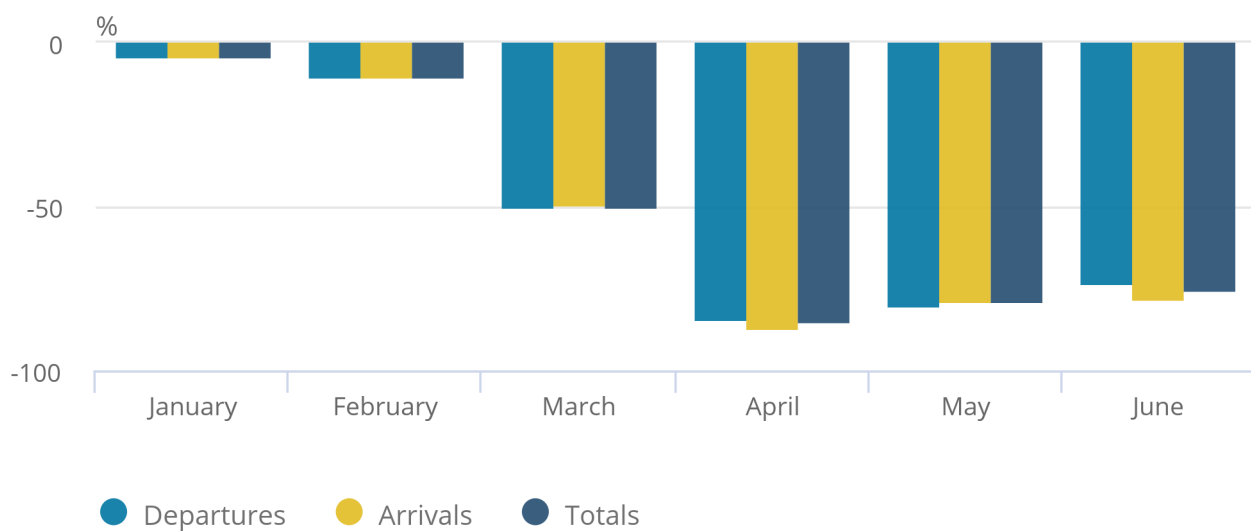
Whilst air travel is the most common route for international travel to or from the UK, people also arrive via other routes including ferry, Eurotunnel and Eurostar. According to monthly figures produced by the Department for Transport, the effect of travel restrictions on short international ferry routes to Ireland and other European countries began to be seen in March 2020. Further impacts were then seen between April and June, with the largest decrease in April 2020, when total traffic dropped by 85% compared with the previous year (Figure 7).

Figure 7: A decline, mainly due to the coronavirus, in passengers travelling by sea was first seen in March 2020 with further reductions in April to June 2020

Annual percentage change in arrivals and departures by short international ferry routes, UK, January to June 2020

Figure 7: A decline, mainly due to the coronavirus, in passengers travelling by sea was first seen in March 2020 with further reductions in April to June 2020

Annual percentage change in arrivals and departures by short international ferry routes, UK, January to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics analysis of Department for Transport Sea Passenger Statistics

Notes:

1. Monthly figures for 2020 are provisional until DfT's publication of the annual bulletin.
2. Figures are based on seaports within UK mainland.
3. Figures include passengers travelling on short-sea international routes to Ireland and other European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Faroe Isles, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden).
4. Figures include passengers travelling for tourism, leisure and business travel, as well as freight drivers accompanying cargo. Assessment by DfT of qualitative information suggest that storms were a large contributor to the passenger decline in February 2020. It is likely that increases across different types of sea passengers contributed to the difference between 2019 and 2020 figures getting smaller in May and June.
5. More information including data on other routes and guidance can be found on the [Maritime and Shipping Statistics page by DfT](#).

We are committed to provide the best analysis and insights on population and migration using a range of new and existing data sources to meet the needs of our users. As part of our ongoing work to [transform migration statistics and deliver new measures based on administrative data](#), we will continue to explore how these sources, alongside other open data, could help us to better understand travel and migration, and potentially provide earlier insights on how patterns are changing since the coronavirus pandemic.

9 . International migration data

Publications released on the same day that are related to this report include:

[Provisional Long-Term International Migration \(LTIM\) estimates](#) Dataset | Released 27 August 2020
Estimates with [confidence intervals](#) for the year ending March 2020 are available. These include data on:

- immigration, emigration and net migration by citizenship over time in Table 1 and Chart 1TS
- immigration and emigration by reason for migration in Table 2 and Charts 2a and 2b
- immigration and emigration by reason for migration and citizenship in Table 3 and Charts 3a and 3b

Preliminary adjusted estimates are available in this dataset and have only been applied to LTIM estimates. The International Passenger Survey (IPS) estimates in Table 3 and Table 4 have not been adjusted.

[International Passenger Survey \(IPS\), estimates by individual quarter](#)

Dataset | Released 27 August 2020

Estimates of international migration, by individual quarter, up to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020. These quarterly estimates can be derived from the IPS but are not fully processed survey data and as such are not official statistics. For more information regarding this decision, see [International migration - terms, definitions and frequently asked questions](#).

Estimates by quarter are not official statistics. Users should be cautious with any interpretation of individual quarter estimates especially where the confidence interval is large in comparison with the estimate.

[Local area migration indicators: August 2020](#)

Dataset | Released 27 August 2020

Different migration-related data sources at local authority level including migration flows, non-UK-born and non-British populations, National Insurance number registrations, GP registrations, and births to non-UK-born mothers.

[Home Office Immigration Statistics, year ending June 2020](#)

Release | Released 27 August 2020

Includes both short- and long-term visas (including dependants) for non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals and is available for the year ending June 2020. The release includes more detailed statistics by visa category, citizenship and industry sector. The release also includes data on citizenship, asylum and resettlement, detention, and returns.

[Statistics relating to passenger arrivals since the COVID-19 outbreak, August 2020](#)

Release | Released 27 August 2020

Experimental statistics on passenger arrivals throughout 2020, including the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

[Fifth report on statistics relating to exit checks](#)

Release | Released 27 August 2020

Annual report that provides data on the proportion of non-EEA nationals who departed before their visa or leave expired, for April 2019 to March 2020.

[EU Settlement Scheme Quarterly Statistics](#)

Release | Released 13 August 2020

Statistics relating to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

[National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals: January 2002 to June 2020](#)

Release | Released 27 August 2020

Includes both short- and long-term migrants for the year ending December 2019. The summary tables provide more detail by nationality and location of registrations in the UK.

[National Insurance registration of DWP working age benefit recipients](#)

Release | 27 August 2020

Differences between the data sources are described in the [August 2019 progress report](#).

10 . Glossary

Long-term international migrant

The Office for National Statistics' (ONS's) migration statistics use the [UN-recommended definition of a long-term international migrant](#): "A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence."

EU citizenship groups

EU estimates exclude British citizens. The following EU citizenship groups are used:

- EU15: citizens of countries that were EU members prior to 2004, for example, France, Germany and Spain
- EU8: citizens of Central and Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004, for example, Poland
- EU2: citizens of Bulgaria and Romania, which became EU members in 2007; between 2007 and 2013, these countries were subject to transitional controls restricting their access to the UK labour market; these restrictions were lifted on 1 January 2014

Home Office visa data are for non-EEA citizens. Non-EEA refers to citizens of countries outside the EU and excludes Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Work-related migration

In the International Passenger Survey (IPS), "Work-related" migration includes those people who migrate with a "Definite job" to go to already and those who migrate "Looking for work".

Full details of the terms and definitions used by the ONS can be found in [International migration: terms, definitions and frequently asked questions](#).

11 . Measuring the data

The sources of data included in this release are not directly comparable. However, taken together, the different sources of data provide a better indication of trends than any single source alone. This approach is explained in the [Report on international migration data sources: July 2018](#) and [Understanding different migration sources: August 2019 progress report](#), which set out our latest understanding of the quality of International Passenger Survey (IPS) migration estimates.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) long-term international migration estimates

The main data source for estimates of long-term international migration is the IPS, which captures migrant intentions. We publish two types of estimates for long-term international migration: the IPS and Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates.

LTIM estimates are based on IPS data but with the following adjustments:

- migrants not included in the IPS survey, such as asylum seekers and refugees, and migrants entering or leaving the UK across the un-surveyed land border with the Republic of Ireland
- migrants changing their intentions with regards to length of stay
- migrants with uncertain intentions (preliminary adjustments - see [Section 12](#))

It is only possible to perform the LTIM adjustments described here for estimates by a single characteristic, such as citizenship or reason for migration. Where estimates involve more than one characteristic, such as estimates by citizenship and reason for migration, estimates are published that are based solely on the IPS data.

The [Migration statistics first time user guide](#) describes these data and the [Long-Term International Migration estimates methodology](#) details the method used to calculate LTIM estimates.

For more detailed information on our migration statistics methodology, please see [International migration methodology](#).

ONS labour market estimates

We produce estimates of the [labour market activity of the resident population in the UK by nationality and country of birth](#) from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Statistical significance testing is not available for the labour market EU and non-EU breakdowns.

A number of differences have been identified when making comparisons between migration data from the Annual Population Survey (APS), LFS and IPS. On 21 August 2019, we published a [report outlining the findings from research into differences between these survey sources](#).

Home Office data

Home Office immigration statistics provide the numbers of people who are covered by the UK's immigration control and related processes, based on a range of administrative and other data sources. Where direct comparisons are made with the IPS data, Home Office visa data are for main applicants only and for long-term visas (one year or more). The [Home Office immigration statistics: user guide](#) provides more detail.

The [Migration research and analysis](#) page brings together a range of statistical and research reports on migration published by the Home Office. This includes EU Settlement Scheme statistics, analysis on the exit checks programme and statistics on migrants' visa and leave status.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data

The DWP National Insurance number (NINo) statistics count the volume of NINos registered to adult non-UK nationals. Further information, including detail on data sources, uses and limitations of the series, is provided in the [background information](#).

The DWP Lifetime Labour Market Database (L2), a 1% extract of the National Insurance and Pay As You Earn System (NPS) and various extracts from DWP benefit systems, has been used in the calculation of the preliminary adjustments made to the IPS estimates of EU8 citizens.

The NPS holds records for anyone who has ever had a NINo, including both resident and non-resident people. These data are used to create the L2 UK Population file.

The L2 UK Population file is a dataset that is derived within DWP that collates information on individual activities within each tax year to enable a judgement to be made about whether a person is resident in the UK in that year. It holds a record for any individual who is on the latest NPS extract and who is alive after 5 April 1978. It assesses their activities and interactions with these source systems within each tax year up to and including the tax year ending 2018 to provide a measure of the resident population in each year.

International travel

On 24 July 2020 the latest travel and tourism estimates based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS) were published including [initial results for January, February and March](#) as well as a more detailed [exploration of travel patterns in Quarter 1](#).

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) collects statistics from more than 60 UK airports. This includes passenger numbers for international air travel between the majority of UK and foreign airports. These figures include passengers carried on international scheduled and chartered services for more than 60 UK airports as reported to airport authorities by UK and foreign airlines.

The CAA figures may not reflect a passenger's entire air journey: the point at which a passenger disembarks from a particular service may not represent their ultimate destination. Although operators are asked to report all passenger journeys, in some cases the actual point of uplift or discharge is not recorded. In such cases all passengers are allocated to the end point of the service, that is, the aircraft's origin or ultimate destination.

It excludes passengers on airlines the CAA do not have consent to publish; working crew members; aircraft chartered by government departments; and passengers at Carlisle, Edmiston London Heliport, Lydd and Shoreham. At the time of this analysis, Stansted airport was not yet available for reporting in June 2020 and therefore excluded from the corresponding months in 2019 and 2020 comparisons. For more information, please see the [notes and FAQ section of the](#) CAA website.

Monthly sea passenger statistics produced by the Department for Transport (DfT) show the number of passengers travelling via short international ferry routes to Ireland and other European countries. More information including data on other routes and guidance can be found on the [Maritime and Shipping Statistics](#) page by DfT.

Population and migration statistics transformation

Working in partnership across the Government Statistical Service (GSS), we are delivering new measures of population and migration based on administrative data sources. Our [transformation overview report](#) provides the latest update on the transformation journey.

As part of this, we are transforming our migration statistics, making use of all available data to provide a richer and deeper understanding of migration. Since July 2018, we have been integrating outcomes from this work into the Migration Statistics Quarterly Report (MSQR).

We published our first set of preliminary adjustments in the [August 2019 MSQR](#) and have applied the same [preliminary adjustments](#) to the headline measures in this report to provide our best possible assessment of migration trends. The figures and trends in this report are therefore based on our adjusted estimates where available, which have so far been applied until 2016 for EU migration and up to the latest year for non-EU migration. Our best assessment of EU net migration since 2016 remains our International Passenger Survey (IPS) -based estimates.

In the future, we have now revised our approach for transforming migration statistics this year because of the current situation around the coronavirus (COVID-19). The IPS - which underpins our existing international migration statistics - has been suspended. The latest available IPS data cover the vast majority of the year ending March 2020 (up to 16 March - when the IPS was suspended), which we have published today. However, there will be no new IPS data available for inclusion in the November 2020 MSQR. We are now planning to move away from the IPS and use administrative data to deliver new measures of migration from November 2020 onwards. This MSQR will be the last set of migration statistics based on IPS data.

For UK trade, and travel and tourism statistics, a [statement](#) was released on 21 May 2020 on the impact of the IPS suspension, and how the ONS are responding to this.

12 . Strengths and limitations

The International Passenger Survey (IPS) and the Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates are currently the only sources of data to provide both long-term immigration and emigration and so net migration estimates for the UK.

The IPS is a sample survey and as such provides estimates. When the estimates are broken down beyond the headline figures, they are subject to greater levels of uncertainty.

To ensure confidence in our estimates, we review all available data sources to make the best assessment of migration in the UK. For example, Home Office administrative data on non-EU citizens travelling are more detailed and do not have the known possible variability present in estimates made from sample surveys.

Accuracy of long-term migration estimates

Surveys gather information from a sample of people from a population, as it is not possible to ask every person travelling in and out of the country to fill out a survey. This means we have to estimate total changes, which can be affected by the group of people we sample. We use [confidence intervals](#) to measure uncertainty around the estimate. Users are advised to be cautious when making inferences from estimates with relatively large confidence intervals.

Preliminary adjustments to LTIM estimates based on all available sources

To get the best overview of trends in migration, we need to look at all available data sources. To help us address the impact of uncertain intentions for non-EU students at the end of their studies and for EU8 citizens moving to the UK, we have applied preliminary adjustments to our IPS-based estimates based on administrative data from the Home Office and from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). These tell us about people's actual behaviour and help provide a fuller assessment of migration patterns.

For EU migration, our preliminary adjustment applies up to March 2016, drawing on the strengths of what DWP data tell us about National Insurance number (NINo) registrations by people who are EU8 nationals. We use the DWP Lifetime Labour Market Database (L2) to calculate the proportion of EU8 nationals registering for a NINo who can be considered long-term migrants. These long-term NINo registrations are then used to adjust the IPS estimates of EU8 immigration. From 2016, we have seen some changes in migration trends for EU countries, and so we are reviewing what further data sources can add evidence on which to base an adjustment after this point.

For non-EU migration, our preliminary adjustment applies from 2012 through to the latest quarter. This draws on the strengths of what Home Office data tell us about emigration of non-EU students.

The methods applied in the current preliminary adjustments are described in full in the [Long-Term International Migration \(LTIM\) methodology guidance \(Section 4\)](#).

Revisions to the ONS migration estimates

Revisions to net migration estimates in light of the 2011 Census were made in April 2014. The report, a [summary and guidance \(PDF, 56KB\)](#) on how to use these revised figures are available.

Owing to an unusual pattern in student migration seen between the year ending September 2016 and the year ending September 2017, revisions were made in February 2019 to LTIM and IPS estimates for non-EU formal study immigration. A [guidance note](#) has been published to explain the revision. The revision affects estimates for the years ending September 2016, December 2016, March 2017 and June 2017. As non-EU student immigration feeds into overall immigration and net migration estimates, we have also produced revised estimates for these figures.

Another unusual pattern was seen in student migration for the year ending March 2020. In August 2020, an adjustment was made for non-EU formal study immigration using the level of change seen in Home Office visa allocations between year ending March 2019 and year ending March 2020. As non-EU student immigration feeds into overall immigration and net migration estimates, we have also produced revised estimates for these figures. This adjustment affects estimates for year ending March 2020 only. [Section 6](#) of this report provides a full description of the adjustment.

IPS imbalance and discontinuity work

The IPS completed work to transfer from paper questionnaires to tablet computer-based data collection in April 2018, following a phased rollout that began in September 2017.

The use of tablets has enabled us to improve the quality of the IPS data collected. However, we have worked with academic experts and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Methodology Team to produce a method for detecting any discontinuities (that is, step changes in the time series) that may have arisen as a result of this change. Analysis of the outputs found no statistically significant impact on international migration estimates.

Methodological changes have also been developed for the estimates of international visitors in the IPS. These are weighting adjustments to address concerns about the imbalance (that is, large differences in numbers) in the IPS between the estimates of numbers of visitors arriving and departing, for some nationalities. The new method has been developed in consultation with users and methodological experts and was implemented in the [IPS overseas travel and tourism statistics](#) published on 22 May 2020. The improved method has been used to produce final estimates for 2019 and a revised back series for the period 2009 to 2018. These changes apply only to travel and tourism statistics and do not affect estimates of long-term international migration.

The changes in data collection methods and methodological changes were in this [statement](#), published on 18 March 2020.

Quality and methodology

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [Long-Term International Migration QMI](#)

For more detailed information on our migration statistics methodology, please see [International migration methodology](#).

13 . Related links

[Providing the best picture of international migration](#)

Blog | Released 21 May 2020

[Defining and measuring international migration](#)

Article | Released 14 February 2020

An overview of our research into how we define and measure international migration.

[Transformation of the population and migration statistics system: overview](#)

Article | Updated 27 August 2020

Latest update on our population and migration statistics transformation journey.

[Understanding different migration data sources: August progress report](#)

Article | Released 21 August 2019

Examining the issues with comparing the UK's various migration data sources, our follow-up report to explain the differences between these sources.

[International migration and the health sector](#)

Article | Released 15 August 2019

Our analysis plans on the contribution and impact of international migration on the health sector, where we will look at migrants both as a workforce and users of public services. In this release, we set out our analysis plans to fill some of the remaining evidence gaps and explore the data available on the healthcare workforce.

[Migrant labour force within the tourism industry: August 2019](#)

Article | Released 15 August 2019

Presents the current demographic composition of those working in the UK's tourism industry and considers movements into and out of the industry.

[International migration and the education sector - what does the current evidence show?](#)

Article | Released 8 May 2019

An exploration of what the current evidence can tell us about the impact and contribution of international migration on the education sector.