Statistical bulletin

Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: May 2020

A summary of the latest official long-term international migration statistics for the UK for the year ending December 2019. Data from the Home Office, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) are also included.

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1 . Other migration outputs in this release

Other international migration outputs released today (21 May 2020) can be found on the following pages:

- Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2020 (Home Office)
- Short-Term International Migration for England and Wales: year ending June 2018 (Office for National Statistics, ONS)
- Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality: January to December 2019 (ONS)
- Migrant Journey: 2019 Report (Home Office)
- EU Settlement Scheme Statistics, April 2020 (Home Office)
- National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals: January 2002 to March 2020 (Department for Work and Pensions, DWP)

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

International migration statistics cover different time periods. The latest ONS estimates of long-term international migration based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS) relate to the year ending December 2019. These estimates are therefore unlikely to have been impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19). However, the latest Home Office immigration statistics and DWP data on National Insurance number allocations both relate to the time period up to the end of March 2020 and therefore have been impacted by the pandemic in some areas.

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 March 2020 (see Section 11). However this is only a partial picture and represents all travel movements, not just international migrants. Today, the Home Office have published some information on recent passenger arrivals which will be followed on 28 May 2020 by a statistical report for the period up to end of April 2020. This will include additional data on arrivals to the UK and other statistics showing the impact of coronavirus on the immigration system.

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 best possible 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.

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. The IPS data collection for the period was completed by 31 December 2019 and is unaffected by recent developments with the coronavirus (COVID-19); for further information please see the Office for National Statistics (ONS) public statement on COVID-19 and the production of statistics.

In the year ending December 2019, long-term international migration continued to add to the UK population. An estimated 270,000 more people moved to the UK with an intention to stay for 12 months or more than left the UK (net migration). Over the year, 677,000 people moved to the UK (immigration) and 407,000 people left the UK (emigration).

Long-term net migration, immigration and emigration have remained broadly stable since the end of 2016. However, there are different patterns for EU and non-EU migration – both overall and by main reason for migration.

Since 2016, there has been a decrease in immigration for work, but recently levels have remained broadly stable. Over the same period, immigration for study has been gradually increasing.

EU net migration

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.

- EU net migration has fallen since 2016, although more EU citizens still arrive long-term than leave.
- The change over this period has mostly been driven by a decrease in those coming to the UK as well as a gradual increase in the number of EU citizens leaving the UK.
- The number of EU citizens coming to the UK for work-related reasons has decreased to the lowest level since 2004, driving the overall fall in immigration for work since 2016.
- While the decrease was initially a result of fewer EU citizens coming to the UK looking for work, since 2018 there has also been a fall in the number of people arriving with a definite job.

Non-EU net migration

- Non-EU net migration has gradually increased since 2013 and is now at the highest level since information by citizenship was first collected in 1975.
- This change has been driven by an increase in the number of non-EU citizens coming to the UK, which is also at the highest level we have seen; the number leaving the UK has remained broadly stable.
- Since 2013, all available data sources have shown gradual increases in the number of non-EU citizens coming to the UK for work-related reasons.
- From 2016, the increase has mainly been a result of a gradual rise in the number of non-EU citizens coming to the UK for formal study, driven by students from China and India; this is a trend reflected in all available data sources with sponsored study visa applications for universities at the highest level since records began in June 2011.

Asylum, humanitarian protection, alternative forms of leave and resettlement

The UK offered protection – in the form of asylum, humanitarian protection, alternative forms of leave and resettlement – to 20,339 people in year ending March 2020, 17% higher than the previous year. This included 4,968 people provided protection under resettlement schemes, mainly Syrian nationals.

Long-term international migration data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are largely based on a survey. It is not possible to survey all people coming to and leaving the UK, so these statistics are estimates based on a sample, not precise figures. Where possible, to assess migration trends we use all available data sources and review the longer time series.

Statistician's comment

"Overall migration levels have remained broadly stable in recent years, but new patterns have emerged for EU and non-EU migrants since 2016.

"For the year ending December 2019, non-EU migration was at the highest level we have seen, driven by a rise in students from China and India, while the number of people arriving from EU countries for work has steadily fallen.

"We know the coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on travel since December and new analysis today shows how international travel to and from the UK has decreased in recent months."

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 December 2019, long-term international migration continued to add to the UK population as an estimated 270,000 more people came to the UK with an intention to stay 12 months or more than left the UK (net migration). Over the last year, 677,000 people moved to the UK (immigration) and 407,000 people left the UK (emigration).

Since the end of 2016, long-term net migration, immigration and emigration have remained broadly stable (Figure 1), although in the latest year we have seen a slight increase in immigration. Some variations in these trends have occurred over this time period, however, we recommend users look at the broader evidence and longer time series, which allow a better assessment of trends.

The findings in this section are based on the preliminary adjusted estimates for the years in which they are available. Otherwise, the unadjusted Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates remain our best available estimates. We have refined our adjustment method in this report and will continue to develop our approach in our future reports, especially as more data become available.

Figure 1: Long-term immigration, emigration and net migration have remained broadly stable since the end of 2016

Long-term international migration, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending December 2019

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 best available 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 December 2019.

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

5 . EU and non-EU migration over time

While overall migration levels have remained broadly stable since the end of 2016, patterns for EU and non-EU citizens have followed different trends. This in part reflects the different trends in immigration for employment and study, with EU migrants predominantly arriving for work-related reasons (see Section 8) and non-EU migrants arriving for study (see Section 9).

EU net migration has fallen following peak levels in 2015 and 2016. Since 2013, non-EU net migration has gradually increased and, as at the year ending December 2019, is at the highest level since International Passenger Survey (IPS) records for this group began in 1975.

The findings in this section are based on the preliminary adjusted estimates for the years in which they are available. Otherwise, the Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates remain our best available estimates. We have refined our adjustment method in this report and will continue to develop our approach in our future reports.

Figure 2: Non-EU net migration has increased since 2013, while EU net migration has decreased since 2016

Net migration by citizenship, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending December 2019

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 best available 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 December 2019.

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

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 2). In the year ending December 2019, 60,000 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.

Table 1: Immigration, emigration and net migration to and from the UK by citizenship, UK, year ending December 2019

	Immigration (unadjusted)		Emigration (adjusted for total and non-EU)		Net migration (adjusted for total and non-EU emigration)	
	YE December 2019	95% CI (+/-)	YE December 2019	95% CI (+/-)	YE December 2019	95% CI (+/-)
Total	677	44	407	:	270	:
British	77	22	138	17	-60	28
EU	196	25	147	24	49	35
(of which) EU15	113	21	69	18	44	27
(of which) EU8	33	9	44	12	-12	15
(of which) EU2	50	11	32	10	18	15
Non-EU	404	29	122	:	282	:

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. Figures may not sum because of rounding.
2. EU other and Other Europe citizenship groupings are not included as separate groups in the table but are included under the EU and non-EU totals.
3. See the glossary for further information on EU groupings.
4. Figures are provisional.
5. YE equals year ending, CI equals confidence interval, and colon (:) equals not available.
6. Confidence intervals represent known uncertainty in the survey estimates. Other sources of uncertainty are not represented.
7. Total and non-EU estimates of emigration and net migration have been adjusted for uncertain intentions for non-EU former students emigrating.
8. 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.

We do not recommend users make comparisons year-on-year; we recommend users look at the broader evidence and longer time series, which allow a better assessment of trends. See Chart 1 TS for trends.

EU net migration has fallen since 2016

Following peak levels of over 200,000 in 2015 and early 2016, EU net migration has declined and stands at 49,000 in the year ending December 2019. This is largely because of a fall in EU immigration (Figure 3). This is the result of a decrease in the number of EU migrants arriving in the UK with the intention of staying for 12 months or more for work-related reasons (see Section 8).

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.

Figure 3: EU net migration has fallen since 2016, but more EU citizens move to the UK than leave the UK

EU long-term international migration, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending December 2019

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 best available 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

The decline in EU net migration since 2016 was a trend seen for all EU groups, although the largest decrease has been seen in EU8[1] citizens (Figure 4). In the last year, net migration for EU2[1] citizens has almost halved, driven by an increase in those leaving the UK. While net migration for EU15[1] citizens has fallen since 2016 it has remained broadly stable in the last two years. For both the EU2 and EU15 (and EU nationals as a whole) there are still more people arriving to stay for more than 12 months than leaving.

As noted, preliminary adjustments have only been applied to the EU8 group for the year ending December 2009 to the year ending March 2016. It is possible that once an adjustment is applied, net migration among this group could change.

Figure 4: The fall in EU net migration since 2016 was a trend seen among all EU groups

Net migration by EU group, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending December 2019

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 best available 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 net migration has gradually increased since 2013

An estimated 282,000 more non-EU citizens moved to the UK than left in the year ending December 2019. This net estimate has gradually increased since 2013, and as at the year ending December 2019 is at the highest level since this information was first collected in 1975. This is largely because of a rise in non-EU immigration, now at the highest level on record, while emigration has remained broadly stable (Figure 5).

Looking at all available data sources, the rise in non-EU immigration since 2016 is mainly driven by more migrants arriving for formal study, although since 2013 there has also been a gradual increase in the number of non-EU citizens coming to the UK for work-related reasons (see Section 8).

Figure 5: Non-EU net migration has gradually increased since 2013, to the highest level on record mainly driven by a rise in those coming to the UK

Non-EU long-term international migration, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending December 2019

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 best available 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 December 2019.

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

The increases in non-EU immigration since 2013 have mainly been driven by a rise in the number of Asian citizens – particularly South Asian and East Asian citizens – coming to the UK, now at 284,000 in the year ending December 2019, a trend reflected in all available data sources.

Note for: EU and non-EU migration over time

1. See the Glossary for further information on EU groupings.

6 . Most common reasons to move to the UK

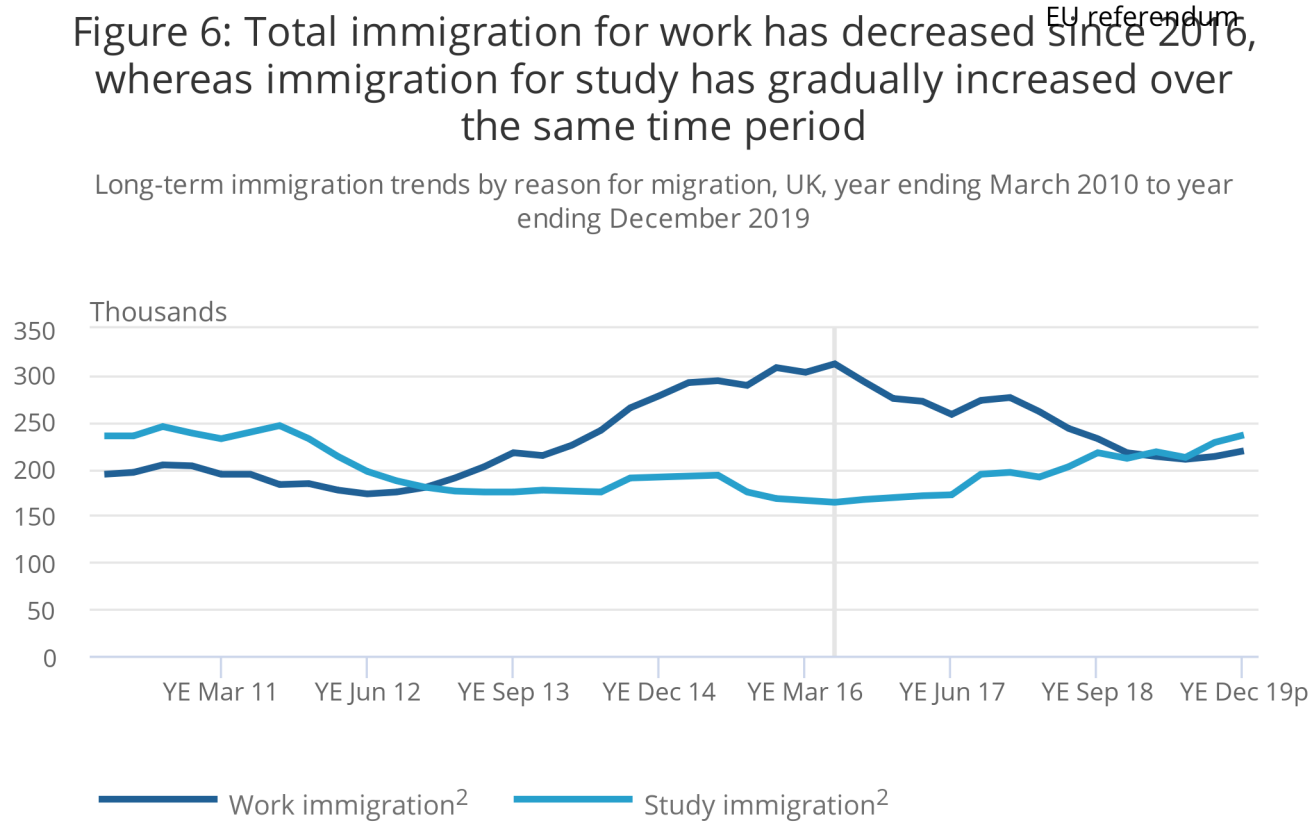
While remaining the two most common reasons to move to the UK, there have been different patterns in the estimates for work and study. From the year ending September 2012 to year ending December 2018, work was the most common reason to move to the UK but since then study has gone back to being the most common reason (Figure 6).

The decrease in work-related immigration since 2016 has mainly been driven by fewer EU migrants arriving in the UK with the intention of staying for 12 months or more for work-related reasons (see Section 8). Over the same time period, there has been a slight increase in the number of non-EU migrants arriving to work (see Section 9).

Preliminary adjustments are not available for estimates of migration by reason for visit. The Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates remain our best available estimates. We have refined our adjustment method in this report and will continue to develop our approach in our future reports.

Figure 6: Total immigration for work has decreased since 2016, whereas immigration for study has gradually increased over the same time period

Long-term immigration trends by reason for migration, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending December 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Long-Term International Migration

Notes:

1. “Accompany/join”, “Other” and “No Reason Stated” are not included in this chart.
2. Confidence intervals are not shown in the chart, but they are available in the accompanying dataset.
3. YE equals year ending.

7 . EU and non-EU nationals working in the UK 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. The dataset containing the latest estimates has been published without the usual accompanying article because of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on ONS labour market outputs. Further details on this can be found in a statement published on 3 April 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 LTIM and IPS estimates are our best available estimates of migration flows for work-related reasons. We will continue to develop our adjustment approach in our future reports.

For the period October to December 2019, the latest estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 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.

Looking over the longer time series, since 2009 the number of EU nationals working in the UK has generally increased but has been broadly flat since the latter half of 2016. The number of non-EU nationals working in the UK remained broadly stable up until early 2019 but has increased slightly since.

8 . EU immigration to the UK, by reason for migration

This section analyses the main reasons EU citizens migrate to the UK; this is based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS) and National Insurance number (NINo) registrations to adult overseas nationals.

Work-related immigration has fallen since the year ending June 2016

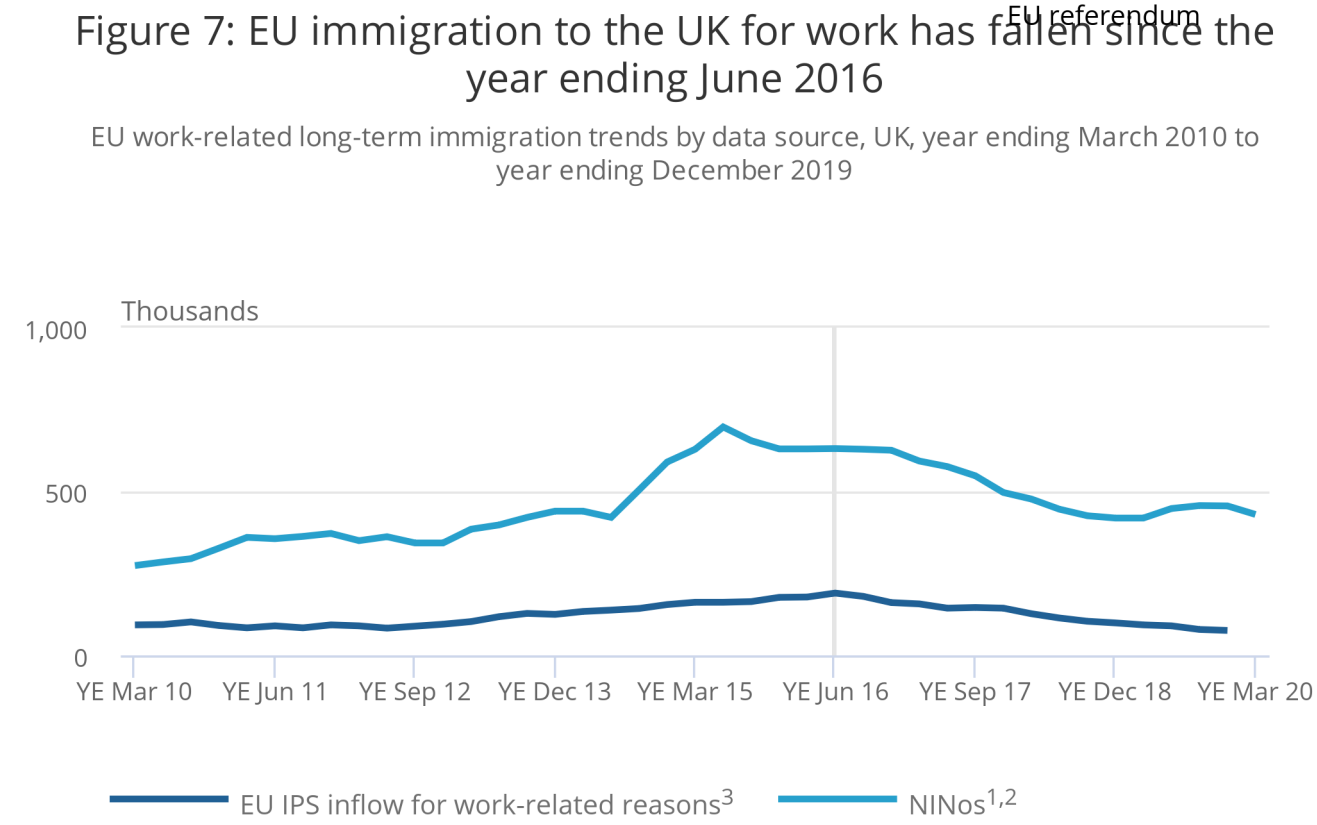
Immigration for work-related reasons has fallen since the year ending June 2016 and can largely be accounted for by a decrease in EU citizens moving to the UK for work. Following a peak of 190,000 in the year ending June 2016, the number of EU citizens arriving for work has fallen to 76,000, the lowest level since 2004. This fall in work-related immigration was seen among all EU groups (EU15, EU8 and EU2).

Foreign citizens require a National Insurance number (NINo) to work in the UK, and NINo registration data can provide another view of work-related immigration. Following a recent peak in 2015, the total number of EU NINo registrations has been falling, in line with the fall seen in the International Passenger Survey (IPS) data (Figure 7).

For EU citizens, the latest available data show that there were 430,000 NINo registrations in the year ending March 2020. The recent increases in registrations should be seen in context with increased operational capacity and the processing of outstanding applications. It is important to remember that NINo registrations data are for all NINo registrations regardless of length of stay or date of arrival. Previous research on NINo interactions data concluded that NINo registrations will include short-term migrants and people who may have been in the country for a while before registering.

Figure 7: EU immigration to the UK for work has fallen since the year ending June 2016

EU work-related long-term immigration trends by data source, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending December 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – International Passenger Survey; Department for Work and Pensions – National Insurance number registrations to adult overseas nationals

Notes:

1. NINo registrations are for all NINo registrations regardless of length of stay or date of arrival, so they will include short-term migrants and people who may have been in the country for a while before registering. A NINo is generally required by any adult overseas national looking to work or claim benefits / tax credits in the UK.

2. There was a change to the process of recording NINos during Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2014 that meant that the volume of NINo registrations recorded was lower in that quarter and then higher in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2014 than would otherwise be the case. Comparisons of NINo registrations over time between these periods should be viewed with caution.

3. Confidence intervals for the IPS-based estimates are not shown in the chart, but they are available in the accompanying dataset.

4. YE equals year ending.

5. Estimates for 2019 are provisional for the IPS-based estimates only.

6. Each data source includes data for the most up to date time period available.

Those looking for work and those moving with a definite job

The decrease in immigration for work-related reasons since the year ending June 2016 was initially driven by those moving to the UK looking for work, followed by a decrease in EU citizens moving to the UK with a definite job.

This pattern was different across the EU groups. For EU15 and EU2 groups the decrease in immigration for work-related reasons was driven by both those looking for work and with a definite job. However, for EU8 citizens this was driven more by a decrease in those looking for work (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Immigration to the UK for those coming with a definite job and looking for work shows different patterns across the EU groups.

EU15, EU8 and EU2 work-related long-term immigration trends by those arriving with a definite job and looking for work, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending December 2019

Notes:

1. Confidence intervals for the IPS-based estimates are not shown in the chart, but they are available in the accompanying dataset.
2. See the glossary for further information on EU groupings.
3. YE equals year ending.
4. Estimates for 2019 are provisional

Download the data

9 . Non-EU immigration to the UK, by reason for migration

This section analyses the main reasons non-EU citizens migrate to the UK; this is based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS), Home Office visa statistics, National Insurance number (NINo) registrations to adult overseas nationals and first-year student enrolments from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Immigration for study is the most common reason for non-EU citizens moving to the UK and has gradually increased since 2016

As has been the long-term trend, formal study remains the most common reason for non-EU citizens coming to the UK, at 174,000 in the year ending December 2019 (50% of total estimated non-EU immigration).

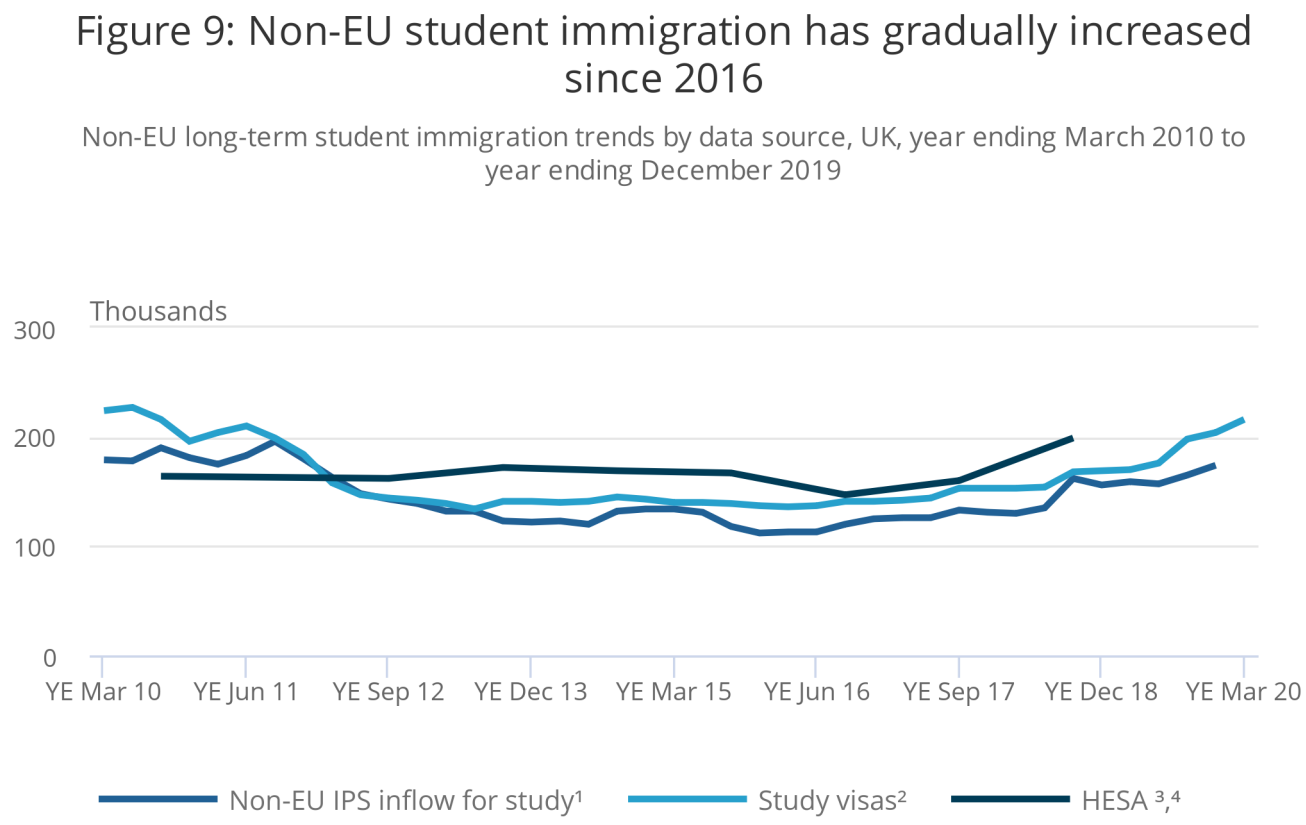
All available data sources have shown an increase in the number of non-EU students arriving in the UK (Figure 9). Following a gradual increase since 2016, the IPS suggests that the overall number of people estimated to arrive in the UK intending to stay for 12 months or more for formal study is 221,000 in the year ending December 2019, the highest level since 2011. Latest available Home Office visa data in the year ending March 2020 show that the number of Tier 4 (sponsored study) visas granted for all lengths of stay (excluding student visitors) was 299,023, its highest level since the year ending June 2011.

The IPS estimates show that the increase in immigration has largely been driven by a rise in Asian citizens coming to the UK for formal study, at 149,000 in the year ending December 2019. 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 their number has more than doubled since 2012. Indian nationals accounted for a further 17%, more than doubling in the latest year (now at 49,844 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.

Figure 9: 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 December 2019



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. Estimates for 2019 are provisional for the IPS-based estimates only.

7. Each data source includes data for the most up to date time period available.

Not all data sources are directly comparable. Users should be aware of this before drawing conclusions.

All available data sources show an increase in non-EU citizens coming to the UK for work since 2013

Following an increase between 2013 and 2017, non-EU immigration for work has remained broadly stable over the last two years.

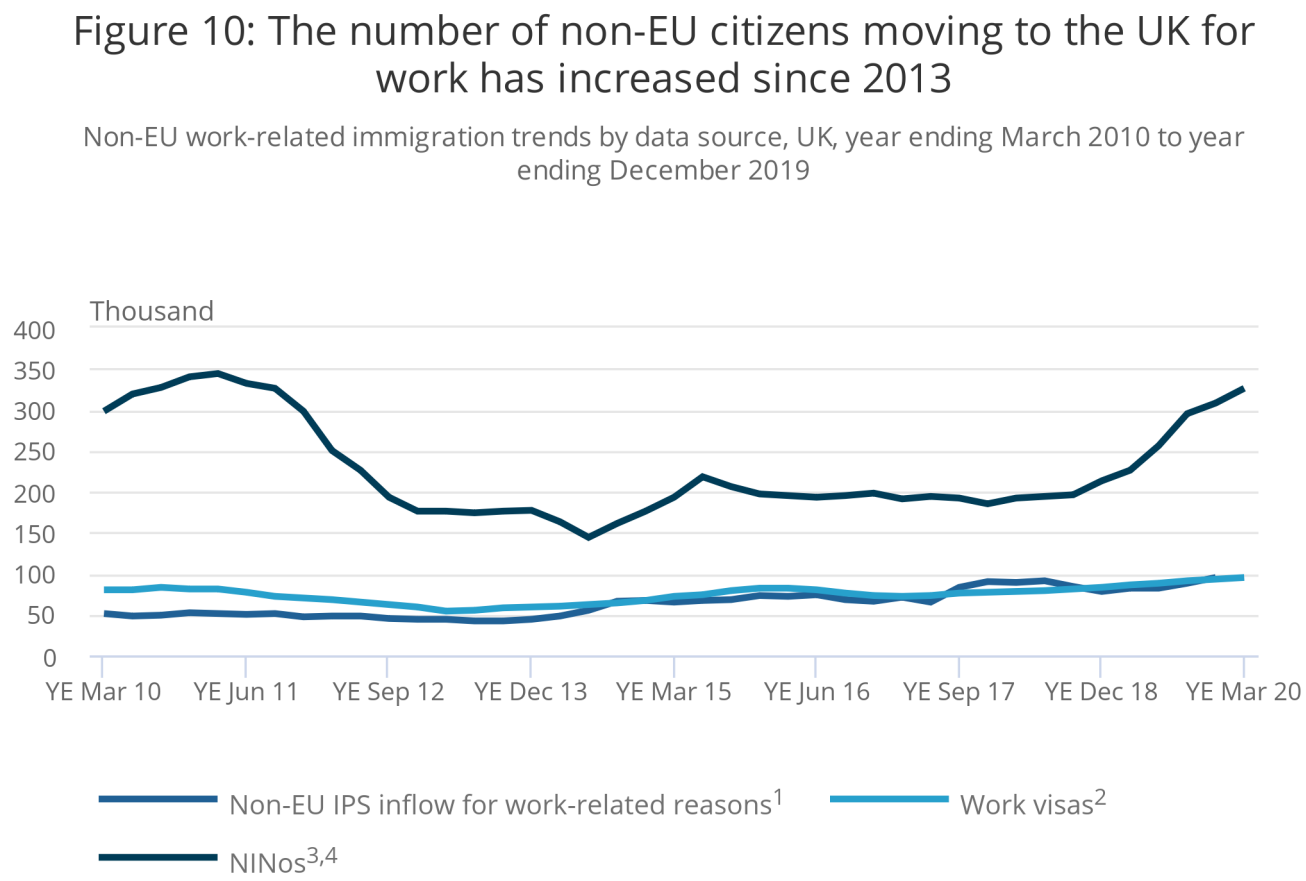
All available data sources have shown increases in the number of non-EU citizens coming to the UK for work since 2013 (Figure 10).

In the International Passenger Survey (IPS), the number of non-EU citizens arriving with a definite job has increased since 2013, now at 85,000 in the year ending December 2019. However, following a peak of 24,000 in the year ending June 2016, the number of non-EU citizens coming to the UK looking for work has fallen to 10,000 in the year ending December 2019.

Latest available Home Office data show that the number of work-related visas (including short-term or temporary work) granted in the year ending March 2020 was 194,557, its highest level since 2007. In the year ending March 2020 (latest data available), there were 326,000 National Insurance number (NINo) registrations from non-EU nationals, an increase of 45% on the previous year. The noticeable increase in NINo registrations to non-EU nationals since September 2018 is mostly because of registration for a NINo of adult dependants as part of certain visa approvals.

Figure 10: The number of non-EU citizens moving to the UK for work has increased since 2013

Non-EU work-related immigration trends by data source, UK, year ending March 2010 to year ending December 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – International Passenger Survey; Home Office – long-term work visas; and Department for Work and Pensions – National Insurance number registrations to adult overseas nationals

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 entry clearance work visas granted for 12 months or more for main applicants only. This data is a subset of the work-related visa data published by the Home Office.

3. NINo registrations are for all NINo registrations regardless of length of stay or date of arrival, so they will include short-term migrants and people who may have been in the country for a while before registering. A NINo is generally required by any adult overseas national looking to work or claim benefits / tax credits in the UK.

4. There was a change to the process of recording NINos during Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2014 that meant that the volume of NINo registrations recorded was lower in that quarter and then higher in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2014 than would otherwise be the case. Comparisons of NINo registrations over time between these periods should be viewed with caution.

5. From September 2018, NINo registrations data includes NINos allocated to dependants of Tier 2 visa applicants.

6. YE equals year ending.

7. Estimates for 2019 are provisional for the IPS-based estimates only.

8. Each data source includes data for the most up to date time period available.

Work-related immigration by nationality and visa type

Home Office visa data and NINo registrations are consistent with trends in the IPS showing an increase in Asian citizens arriving in the UK for work. In the year ending March 2020, the number of work visas granted to Asian nationals was 116,314, the highest level since the year ending March 2007, before the “points based system” was introduced. Of these, 69% (80,403) were for skilled work (Tier 2), the highest level on record.

Indian nationals accounted for half of the skilled work visas granted in the year ending March 2020, although there have also been increases in Philippine and Nigerian nationals in the latest year. Since 2013, there has been an increase of 105% in NINo registrations for Asian nationals, to 189,000 in the year ending March 2020.

Home Office data also show that a majority (59%) of non-EU work migrants came to the UK for skilled work (Tier 2 visas), which has increased by 9% to 115,434 in the year ending March 2020, the highest level on record. The number of Tier 2 visas has been rising steadily since July 2018, when doctors and nurses were removed from the Tier 2 cap. 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.

10 . Asylum, alternative forms of leave or resettlement

Home Office statistics show that the UK offered protection – in the form of asylum, humanitarian protection, alternative forms of leave and resettlement – to 20,339 people in the year ending March 2020, 17% higher than the previous year and similar to levels seen in 2003. This consisted of:

- 12,863 grants of asylum
- 1,482 grants of humanitarian protection
- 1,026 grants of an alternative form of leave
- 4,968 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 3,761 people had an appeal allowed following an initial refusal of asylum.

11 . Insights on recent international travel patterns

In 2020, international travel restrictions across multiple countries have been enforced because of the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). On 17 March 2020, in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advised “against all non-essential travel overseas for British nationals”. The UK travel advice from FCO also “reflected the pace in which other countries were closing their borders or implementing restrictive measures”.

These restrictions have affected travel to and from the UK since early 2020. To provide a more recent picture than the official statistics on long-term international migration given in this report, which covers the time period up to December 2019, we have been exploring what other, alternative data could be available to provide insights into international travel since then. These insights are not measures of international migration as they refer to travel patterns by all types of passengers, not just international migrants. By looking at the volume of travel through these routes in 2020 compared with previous years, we can see how travel patterns have started to change during the coronavirus pandemic.

The insights below 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.

Today, the Home Office have published some information on recent passenger arrivals, which shows that: “In the first quarter of this year (January to March 2020), there were an estimated 23.7 million passenger arrivals (including returning UK residents). This is an 18% (5.4 million) decrease compared with the same period in 2019, with significant falls towards the end of the quarter.

At the same time the number of applications for visitor visas in the first quarter of 2020 was 26% lower (-145,098) than in the same period in 2019".

This will be followed on 28 May 2020 by a statistical report for the period up to end of April 2020, which will include additional data on arrivals to the UK and other statistics showing the impact of coronavirus on the immigration system.

We give further insights below based on other available data sources on air, sea and international rail travel. Note that these do not provide a measure of international migration as they represent travel by all types of passengers, not just international migrants.

Air travel

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) collects statistics from more than 60 UK airports. This includes total passenger numbers for international air travel between the majority of UK and foreign airports (see Table 12.1). These statistics do not distinguish between UK arrivals or departures, instead numbers are for total passengers. Also, they do not provide information like nationality or country of residence of the passengers. See Section 14 for more information on using this data source for migration purposes.

CAA statistics on passenger numbers flying between the UK and other parts of the world show variability in trends because of seasonal effects and can be driven by various social and economic factors. As expected, because of the travel restrictions around the world, the volume of passengers flying between the UK and other countries was significantly lower in March 2020 compared with March 2019 (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Percentage change in monthly air passenger totals between airports in the UK and airports in regions of the world

January to March, 2019 and 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics analysis of Civil Aviation Authority statistics, Table 12.1

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 14 and see the CAA website for the notes of Table 12.1 and the FAQ section.

3. Percentage change is based on comparisons of the corresponding month between 2019 and 2020. For example for March, where the percentage change is negative the volume of passengers is lower in March 2020 than it was in March 2019. Equally, where it is positive the volume of passengers is higher in March 2020 than it was in March 2019.

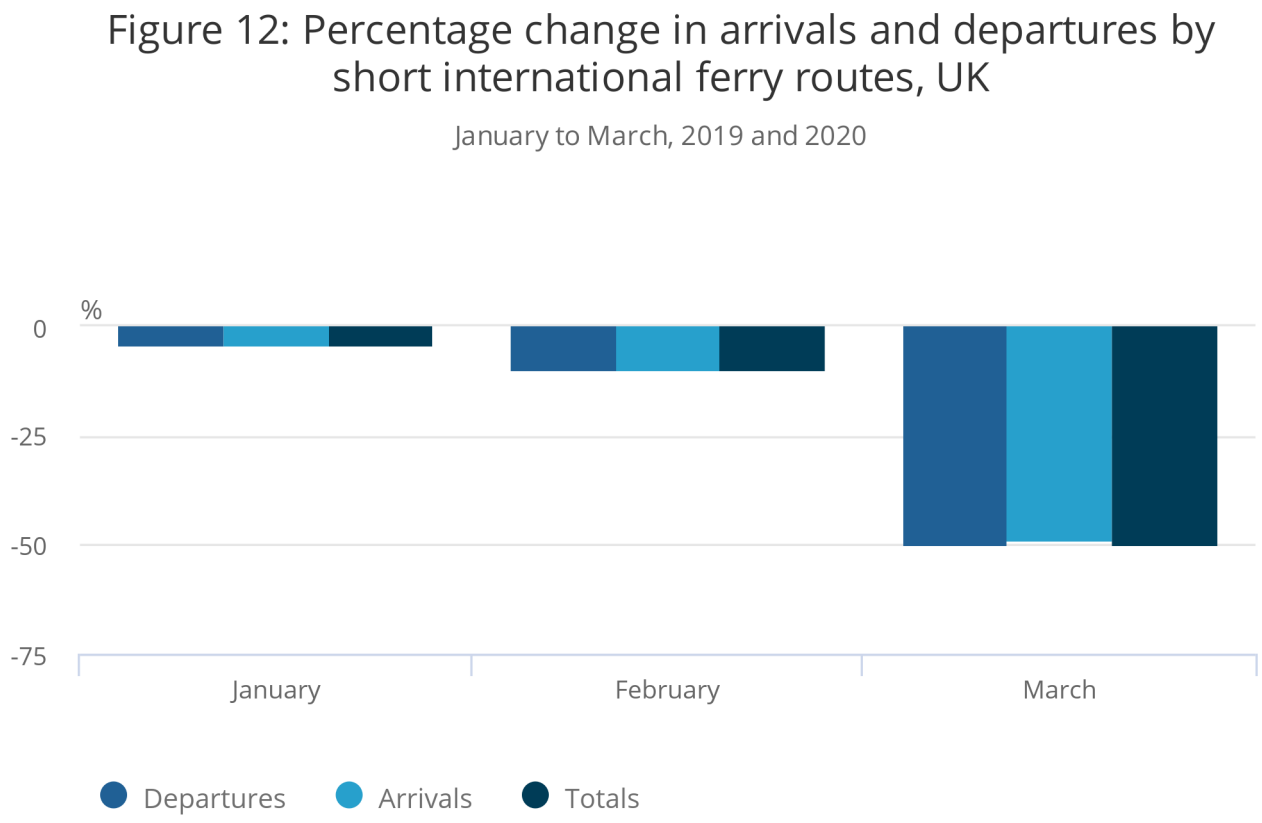
Download the data

Sea and international rail travel

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. 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. January and February 2020 saw small decreases in passenger volumes via this route, with storms attributed to some of the passenger decline. The largest decrease was seen in March 2020 when total traffic dropped by 50% compared with the previous year (Figure 12). A similar insight was found for Eurotunnel travel where in March 2020 there was around a 60% drop in car and coach passengers travelling on the Eurotunnel compared with the previous year. See Section 14 for more information on these data sources.

Figure 12: Percentage change in arrivals and departures by short international ferry routes, UK

January to March, 2019 and 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. Assessment by DfT of qualitative information from operators and complimentary data sources such as ship arrivals suggest that storms in February 2020 were a large contributor to the passenger decline seen here.
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.

12 . 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 21 May 2020
Estimates with confidence intervals for the year ending December 2019 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.

Short-Term International Migration for England and Wales: year ending June 2018
Dataset| Released 21 May 2020
Estimates with confidence intervals for the year ending June 2018 are available. These include data on:

- Table STIM.01a: Migration flows (1 to 12 month migrants, all reasons for migration) by citizenship, by main reason for migration
- Table STIM.01b: Migration flows (3 to 12 month migrants, all reasons for migration) by citizenship, by main reason for migration
- Table STIM.01c: Migration flows (migrants satisfying United Nations definition of Short-Term International Migrant) by citizenship by main reason for migration

International Passenger Survey (IPS), estimates by individual quarter

Dataset | Released 21 May 2020

Estimates of international migration, by individual quarter, up to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2019. 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.

Home Office Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2020
Release | Released 21 May 2020
Includes both short- and long-term visas (including dependants) for non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals and is available for the year ending March 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.

Home Office Migrant Journey: 2019 report

Release | Released 21 May 2020
Explore changes in non-EEA migrants' visa and leave status as they journey through the UK's immigration system. Formerly known as 'Statistics on changes in migrants' visa and leave status'.

EU Settlement Scheme Monthly Statistics, April 2020
Release | Released 21 May 2020
This report provides the latest high-level information on the EU Settlement Scheme, up to 30 April 2020.

EU Settlement Scheme Quarterly Statistics, March 2020
Release | Released 14 May 2020
This report provides detailed statistics on applications made to the EU Settlement Scheme from 28 August 2018 to 31 March 2020, and applications concluded during the same time period.

National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals: January 2002 to March 2020
Release | Released 21 May 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.

Differences between the data sources are described in the August 2019 progress report.

International migration – table of contents
Dataset | Updated 21 May 2020

Tool to locate the datasets for all Office for National Statistics (ONS) international migration outputs.

13 . 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.

14 . 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 data 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 15)

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 to 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 PAYE 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.

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) statistics

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) collects statistics from more than 60 UK airports. This includes total passenger numbers for international air travel between the majority of UK and foreign airports (see Table 12.1).

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 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; charter operations performed on aircraft with fewer than 25 seats; and passengers at Barrow, Battersea Heliport, Carlisle, Plymouth and Shoreham.

At the time of this analysis, the following airports were not yet available for March 2020 reporting: Aberdeen, Bournemouth, Bristol, Glasgow, Guernsey, London City, Southampton and Southend. Therefore they were excluded from March 2019 and 2020 comparisons.

For more information, please see the CAA website for the notes of Table 12.1 and the FAQ section.

Sea and international rail travel

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.

Eurotunnel trains transport freight and passengers in their motor vehicles between the UK and France. Our analysis of the data includes car and coach passengers travelling on the Eurotunnel between the UK and France. It excludes passengers travelling via trucks as these are categorised as freight-related.

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, which we are due to publish in the August MSQR. 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. The August MSQR will be the last set of migration statistics based on IPS data.

For UK trade, and travel and tourism statistics, today (21 May 2020) we have released a statement on the impact of the IPS suspension and how we are responding to this.

15 . 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.

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 will be implemented in the IPS overseas travel and tourism statistics due to be 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 set out 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.

16 . Related links

Understanding international migration in a rapidly changing world
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 21 May 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.