

Statistical bulletin

Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: November 2018

A summary of the latest official long-term international migration statistics for the UK for the year ending June 2018 published by Office for National Statistics (ONS). Data from the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are also included.



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1 . Other migration outputs in this release

As part of our ongoing work to improve bulletins, commentary on other international migration outputs released today (29 November 2018) can be found on the following pages:

- [Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality: July 2017 to June 2018](#)
- [Long-term international migrants, UK: 2017](#)

2 . Migration is still adding to the population of the UK

Net migration continues to add to the population of the UK as an estimated 273,000 more people moved to the UK with an intention to stay 12 months or more than left in the year ending June 2018. Over the year, 625,000 people moved to the UK (immigration) and 351,000 people left the UK (emigration) (Figure 1).

Available data suggest that net migration, immigration and emigration figures have remained broadly stable overall since the end of 2016

Figure 1: Long-Term International Migration, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending June 2018

In this release we present the Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) and International Passenger Survey (IPS) data with shading around the line on the charts to represent the uncertainty of the estimates due to the number of people surveyed. The line is the most likely value and the values towards the upper and lower band of the shading are possible but less likely. [Other sources of uncertainty are not represented.](#)

Non-EU net migration was the highest since 2004, with 248,000 more non-EU citizens arriving than leaving the UK and at a similar level to that seen in 2011. Increases in immigration for both work and study have been seen in the most recent year, particularly for Asian citizens.

The overall number of EU citizens coming to the UK continues to add to the population as 74,000 more EU citizens came to the UK than left. This was the lowest estimate for EU net migration since 2012 and the lowest immigration level since 2014.

The number of EU citizens coming to the UK for work has continued to decrease; in the most recent period this was driven by a decrease in EU15 citizens coming with a definite job. Non-EU citizens coming to work has seen a gradual increase over the last five years.

We recommend that users look at the longer time series and broader evidence when making comparisons over time as the increase in people moving to the UK, particularly non-EU nationals, in the most recent rolling years is misleading. This is because [the International Passenger Survey estimates for student immigration in 2016 showed an unusual decrease](#) that was not seen in other data sources.

Statistician's comment

"Net migration continues to add to the population and has remained fairly stable since its peak in 2016, with around 270,000 more people coming to the UK than leaving in the year ending June 2018.

“However, there are different patterns for EU and non-EU migration. Due to increasing numbers arriving for work and study, non-EU net migration is now at the highest level since 2004. In contrast, EU net migration, while still adding to the population as a whole, is at the lowest since 2012.

“Decisions to migrate are complex and people's decision to move to or from the UK will be influenced by a range of factors.”

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

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3 . Net migration continues to add to the population as more people arrive to live in the UK than leave

To fully understand migration, we need to consider all available data sources. On this basis, our best assessment of all sources is that net migration, immigration and emigration overall have remained broadly stable since the end of 2016.

Non-EU net migration was at its highest level since 2004

Figure 2: Net migration by citizenship, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending June 2018

Net migration estimates show that 248,000 more non-EU citizens came to the UK than left in the year ending June 2018 (Figure 2). This was the [highest non-EU net migration since 2004](#). This increase was driven by a gradual increase in immigration and decrease in emigration in recent years.

Non-EU immigration has seen a gradual increase over the last five years and was 326,000 in the year ending June 2018, similar to levels seen in 2011. The number of non-EU citizens leaving the UK has decreased over the same time period.

EU net migration was the lowest since 2012 but we still saw 74,000 more people arrive in the UK than leave

Figure 3: EU Long-Term International Migration, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending June 2018

Despite net migration for EU citizens being the lowest since 2012, EU citizens continue to add to the population of the UK, with an estimated 74,000 more coming to the UK than leaving in the year ending June 2018 (Figure 3). EU net migration has now fallen to the level seen in 2012 just before the sharp rise in numbers coming to the UK began in 2013.

The number of EU citizens who came to the UK was 219,000. This was lower than levels seen in 2015 and 2016 but higher than in the years up to 2014.

The number of EU citizens leaving the UK has remained broadly stable over the last year, but rose gradually since year ending September 2015.

EU15 and EU2 citizens continued to add to the population with positive net migration for the year ending June 2018. However, some of this increase was offset as more EU8 citizens left the UK than arrived (Table 1). Net migration for EU8 citizens has seen a sharp decrease over the last two years and it is now estimated that 14,000 more EU8 citizens left the UK than arrived. This has been driven by a decrease in EU8 immigration, particularly for work, and an increase in emigration over the last two years.

There could be several reasons for this changing pattern, decisions to migrate are complex and people's decision to move to or from the UK will be influenced by a range of factors.

Table 1: Immigration, emigration and net migration to and from the UK by citizenship, UK, year ending June 2018

	Thousands					
	Immigration		Emigration		Net Migration	
	YE June 2018	95% CI	YE June 2018	95% CI	YE June 2018	95% CI
Total	625	+/-41	351	+/-28	+273	+/-49
British	80	+/-18	128	+/-14	-49	+/-23
EU	219	+/-27	145	+/-22	+74	+/-34
(of which) EU15	114	+/-19	67	+/-15	+47	+/-24
(of which) EU8	41	+/-12	55	+/-13	-14	+/-18
(of which) EU2	55	+/-13	21	+/-8	+34	+/-15
Non-EU	326	+/-25	78	+/-11	+248	+/-27
(of which) Asia	208	+/-18	43	+/-7	+164	+/-19
(of which) Rest of World	104	+/-16	28	+/-7	+76	+/-18

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

Notes

1. 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. [Back to table](#)
2. Figures for 2018 are provisional. [Back to table](#)
3. YE = year ending, CI = confidence interval. [Back to table](#)

The annual change in non-EU immigration and total immigration are influenced by the unusual decrease in student immigration in 2016. We do not recommend users make comparisons year-on-year and instead look at the broader evidence and longer time series, which allows a better assessment of trends. See [Chart 1 TS](#) for trends.

4 . Migration for work remains the most common reason for migration

Immigration to the UK for all types of work increased between 2012 and the year ending June 2016 to a peak of 312,000, but has been lower since and is now 242,000. The decrease was largely accounted for by a fall in the number of EU citizens arriving looking for work, with 37,000 in the year ending June 2018, down from 82,000 at the peak two years earlier. However, there has also been a rise in the number of non-EU citizens coming to the UK for work.

EU citizens coming to the UK for work continues to decrease

Figure 4: EU and non-EU long-term immigration for work-related reasons, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending June 2018

The number of EU citizens coming to the UK looking for work has stabilised in the last year for all EU groupings. This follows the decrease seen between the year ending June 2016 and June 2017 when the number arriving more than halved.

The number of EU citizens coming with a definite job was stable in the year to June 2017 while the number looking for work was falling. Since then the pattern has changed and in the latest year, to June 2018, the number with a definite job has decreased (down 32,000), particularly citizens of EU15 countries (down 26,000 to 34,000). The overall number of EU citizens coming to the UK for a definite job is now back to a level similar to those seen in 2013 and 2014, at 77,000 in the year ending June 2018 (Figure 4).

Foreign citizens require a National Insurance number (NINo) to work in the UK and NINo registration data can be used to provide another view of work-related immigration. International Passenger Survey (IPS) and NINo data continue to follow a similar trend, with a [decrease since the year ending December 2016 in the number of new NINo registrations to EU citizens](#) as reported in the last quarter. We will continue to monitor this trend across both data sources.

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

Large fall in the number of EU nationals in employment in the UK

Office for National Statistics (ONS) also produces estimates of the [labour market activity of the resident population in the UK by nationality and country of birth](#).

The most recent labour market statistics show that there was a fall in the number of EU citizens working in the UK. The IPS data have shown falling numbers of EU citizens arriving for work-related reasons.

For the period July to September 2018 the labour market release shows:

- there were 2.25 million EU citizens working in the UK, which was 132,000 fewer than for the previous year and is the largest annual fall since comparable records began in 1997
- there were also 1.24 million non-EU nationals working in the UK, 34,000 more than the previous year

The number of migrants working in the UK is not a measure of how many people migrate to work. While the Labour Force Survey (LFS) data appear consistent with the IPS migration flows, users should not use the LFS employment trends as a measure of migration flows. The best measure of total migration flows into and out of the UK is the Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates. [Not all data sources are directly comparable](#) and users should be aware of these differences before drawing conclusions.

Non-EU citizens coming to work remains stable in recent years

Figure 5: Non-EU work-related long-term immigration trends by data source, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending June 2018

Looking at all available sources (Figure 5) comparing the IPS with work visas and NINOs, we conclude that immigration of non-EU citizens for work has remained broadly stable since 2015 and seen a small gradual increase since 2013 following a steady fall from the early to mid-2000s.

According to the IPS, [the number of non-EU citizens coming to the UK for work has increased to levels last seen in 2006](#) but viewed alongside the visa data the IPS appears to have underestimated immigration for work in 2006.

Although non-EU immigration for work has remained fairly stable since 2015, there has been an increase in the immigration of Asian, particularly South Asian, citizens over the last year for work-related reasons. The IPS shows an increase for those coming with a definite job.

The latest comparable Home Office data (to the year ending September 2018) for work visa grants for 12 months or more also saw an increase (7%). Visa grants for Tier 2 (Skilled) account for more than half of all work visas and saw an increase of 15% compared with the year ending September 2017, in particular, there were increases for Indian nationals.

There was also an increase in the number of certificates of sponsorship used in applications for Tier 2 (Skilled) work in the human health and social work sector (up 45% in the year ending September 2018). This is likely relating to an increase in the number of doctors and nurses coming to the UK following the removal of doctors and nurses from the Tier 2 cap.

5 . Non-EU long-term student immigration remained broadly stable from 2013 to 2017

Our assessment based on reviewing data from all sources is that non-EU long-term student immigration remained broadly stable from 2013 to 2017. Based on evidence from Home Office visa data and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, we produced an illustrative revised trend (reported further in July 2018) for the [International Passenger Survey \(IPS\) non-EU student immigration estimate](#) (Figure 6).

Non-EU long-term student immigration remained broadly stable from 2013 to 2017 with an increase in the last year

Figure 6: Non-EU long-term student immigration trends by data source, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending June 2018

The most comparable Home Office visa data for the year ending June 2018 show there was a 7% increase in the number of study visas issued over the year. The latest Home Office data, for year ending September 2018 suggest this trend has continued as there was a 10% increase in the number of Tier 4 (Sponsored Study) visas issued for 12 months or more, the highest level since 2011. This increase was driven by visas issued to Chinese and Indian nationals.

The IPS estimate of EU citizens coming to the UK to study over the last 10 years has remained relatively stable.

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

The UK granted asylum, alternative forms of protection, or resettlement to 15,170 people in the year ending September 2018

Home Office data show that this comprised:

- 6,904 grants of asylum (down 1,250, or 15% over the year), driven predominantly by falls in grants to Eritrean (down 988), Iranian (down 560) and Sudanese (down 458) nationals
- 2,272 grants of an alternative form of protection (more than doubled), driven predominantly by an increase in grants of humanitarian protection to Libyan nationals (up 742)
- 5,994 people provided protection under resettlement schemes (down 6%)

6 . Migration data

Office for National Statistics long-term international migration statistics are estimated based on two main sources:

- the International Passenger Survey (IPS), which captures migration intentions
- Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates, which are based on IPS data, but with adjustments made for migrants not included in the survey, such as asylum seekers

[Provisional Long-Term International Migration estimates](#)

Dataset | Released 29 November 2018

Estimates with confidence intervals for the year ending June 2018 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 Chart 3a and 3b

[Home Office Immigration Statistics release](#)

Release | Released 29 November

Includes both short-term and long-term visas (including dependants) for non-EEA nationals and is available for year ending September 2018. 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.

[National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals](#)

Release | Released 29 November 2018

Includes both short-term and long-term migrants for year ending September 2018. The summary tables provide more detail by nationality and location of registrations in the UK.

[Estimates of long-term international migration, by quarter, derived from the International Passenger Survey](#)

Dataset | Released 29 November 2018

Estimates of international migration, by individual quarter, can be derived from the IPS as a “by-product” of our IPS annual processing. They are not official statistics, but we are making them available in response to user requests for the information.

It is important to note that estimates by quarter are not as robust as our estimates for rolling years and are not official statistics. This is due to the small sample sizes involved and because the complete methodology applied to our estimates for full years cannot be applied to our estimates for individual quarters.

We recommend users do not use these data and instead refer to the [rolling years quarterly tables](#). Due to the seasonal nature of international migration and the small sample sizes involved for individual quarter data, users should be cautious with any interpretation of individual quarter estimates, especially where the corresponding confidence interval is large in comparison with the estimate.

Differences between the data sources are described in [Comparing sources of international migration statistics](#).

7 . Glossary

Long-term international migrant

Office for National Statistics (ONS) 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. Citizens of countries who were EU members prior to 2004, for example, France, Germany and Spain, are termed the EU15; Central and Eastern European countries who joined the EU in 2004, for example, Poland, are the EU8; EU2 comprises Bulgaria and Romania, who became EU members in 2007.

Work-related migration

In the International Passenger Survey “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 ONS terms and definitions can be found in the [International Migration – terms, definitions and frequently asked questions](#).

8 . Measuring these data

The sources of data included in this release are not directly comparable but taken together 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](#), which sets out our latest understanding of the quality of International Passenger Survey (IPS) migration estimates.

The Government Statistical Service Migration Statistics Transformation Programme is working [towards putting administrative data at the core of international migration statistics](#). In December 2018, Office for National Statistics (ONS) will publish their findings from the feasibility research on using linked administrative data to provide international migration flows and be seeking feedback on user needs across the international migration evidence base.

Office for National Statistics data

ONS publish International Passenger Survey (IPS) and Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates.

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

All of the LTIM and IPS estimate changes discussed in the release are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level unless specifically stated otherwise.

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

ONS 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 up to July to September 2018. Statistical significance testing is not available for the labour market EU and non-EU breakdowns.

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 [User Guide to Home Office Immigration Statistics](#) provides more details.

Department for Work and Pensions data

The Department for Work and Pensions (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](#).

Differences between the data sources are described in [Comparing sources of international migration statistics](#).

9 . Strengths and Limitations of ONS international migration data

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 is more detailed and do not have the known possible variability present in estimates made from sample surveys.

The accuracy of long-term migration estimates

Surveys gather information from a sample of people from a population. It's 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.

The [Migration statistics first time user guide](#) summarises the reliability of the long-term international migration estimates. For further information on confidence intervals, the accuracy of these statistics, comparing different data sources and the difference between provisional and final figures, please see [International migration methodology](#).

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.

Uncertainty in ONS migration statistics

In this release we present the LTIM and IPS data with shading around the line on the charts to represent the uncertainty of the estimates due to the number of people surveyed, based on 30%, 60% and 95% confidence intervals. The line on the chart is the most likely value and the values towards the upper and lower band of the shading are possible but less likely.

Other sources of uncertainty are not represented, a few examples of this include: limitations of the survey methodology, potential misunderstandings of the questions, accuracy of interviewees' answers and uncertainties caused by combining data from different sources.

Adjusting the LTIM and IPS estimates

Because of the [unusual pattern in student migration](#) reported in July 2018, we produced an illustrative revised trend for the IPS non-EU student immigration estimate. For the year ending September 2016 estimates onwards, we have taken the year-on-year percentage change in Home Office non-EU long-term student visa data and applied this rate of change to the IPS estimates for non-EU immigration for study. The illustrative revised trend shows a relatively stable pattern over this time period for IPS non-EU student immigration.

As non-EU student immigration feeds into overall immigration and net migration estimates, we have also produced illustrative revised trends for these estimates. These are for illustrative purposes only and we have not made any changes to the published IPS or LTIM figures. We plan to review this and consider whether a formal adjustment should be made.

Quality and methodology

The [Long-Term International Migration Quality and Methodology Information report](#) contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
- uses and users of the data
- how the output was created
- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data

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

10 . More about migration

[Building our understanding of the migration evidence](#)

Bulletin section 9 | Released on 23 August 2018

An update of the Migration Statistics Transformation Programme for August 2018.

[Report on international migration data sources: July 2018](#)

Article | Released on 16 July 2018

An update on our migration statistics transformation plans, our recent analysis of Home Office administrative data, in collaboration with Home Office experts and our International Passenger Survey (IPS) data assurance review.

[Migration statistics transformation update: May 2018](#)

Article | Released on 24 May 2018

An update of the Migration Statistics Transformation Programme for May 2018.

[What's happening with international student migration?](#)

Article | Released on 24 August 2017

An update on our progress towards developing a better understanding on student migration to and from the UK since the April 2017 update.

11 . You may also be interested in

[Office for National Statistics international migration articles](#)

All ONS articles relating to international migration.

[International migration – table of contents](#)

Dataset | Released on 29 November 2018

Tool to locate the datasets for all ONS international migration outputs.

[Nationality at point of National Insurance number registration of Department for Work and Pensions working age benefit recipients: data to November 2017](#)

Release | Released 29 November 2018

These statistics provide the number of claimants receiving one or more DWP Working Age (WA) benefits broken down by nationality.

[Home Office Migration Research and Analysis](#)

Research and statistics on migration to support Home Office policy development and operational activity.

[Home Office Developments in migration statistics since 2010](#)

Article | Released on 23 August 2018

Recent changes introduced by Home Office statisticians to a wide range of UK migration statistics.

[Migration Advisory Committee \(MAC\)](#)

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) is an independent, non-statutory, non-time limited, non-departmental public body that advises the government on migration issues.